# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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(NOTE: This number, being released late, has been reduced to the above items, and is issued primarily to provide a continuous record of Maryland bird life under "The Season". Other material is being deferred to the 1954 numbers. )

COVER: American Egret at Back River; prize photograph by Charles J. Cignatta
HEADINGS: Irving E. Hampe

M A R Y L A N D B I R D L I F E

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# MARYLAND BIRDLIFE

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**Volume 9** **September - December, 1953** **Numbers 4 - 5**


## THE EVENING GROSBEAK IN MARYLAND


Chandler S. Robbins

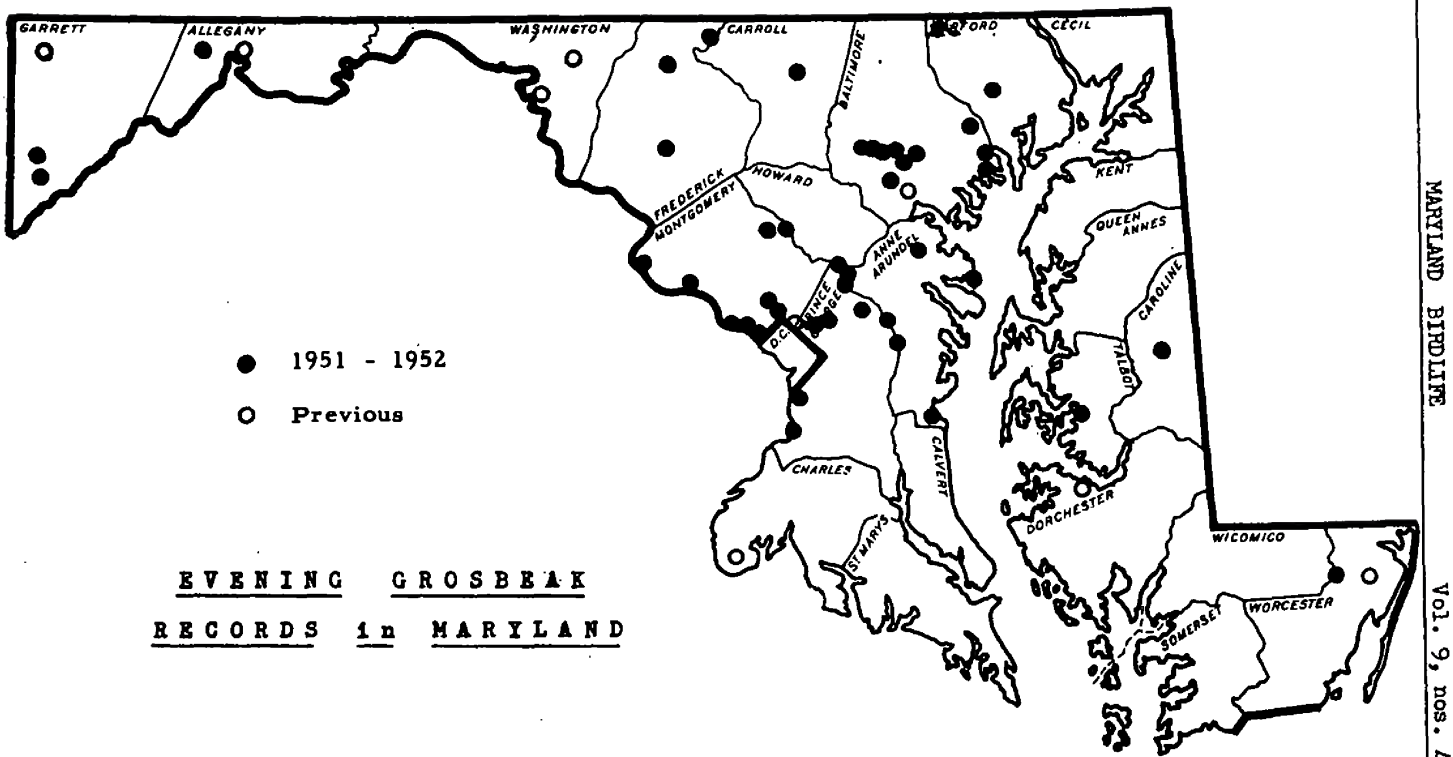

The most exciting ornithological event of the winter of 1951-52 in the eastern United States was the widespread irruption of Evening Grosbeaks. Whether this is to remain the greatest invasion of its kind or whether it was just one more big step in the southeastward movement of this species remains to be determined. But since it so far exceeds any previous visitation of this colorful northern bird into our State, an effort has been made to gather together all records of its occurrence here during the past winter. Thanks are extended to all observers who submitted records, and especially to Hervey Brackbill who compiled most of the material for the Baltimore area.

### History

Known to science only since the year 1823, when it was first discovered in Michigan, the Evening Grosbeak has attracted special interest ever since its first appearance at Toronto in 1854. Its gradual spread eastward during its winter wanderings has been summarized by Bagg and Eliot (1): in 1860 to Ohio, 1875 to northeastern New York, 1890 to New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. After an absence of nearly 14 years, another eastward visit occurred in the winter of 1903-04; and from that time onward few winters passed without at least a few records as far east as New England.

The first Maryland records were secured in the winter and spring of 1922 when scattered observations of this species were made as far south as North Carolina. The initial Maryland report came from W. D. Gould who identified 2 in January 1922 at Cambridge. George Marshall found 5 at Laurel on April 3, and 6 on the 5th and 6th of that month. On April 23 R. H. Higgins saw a female at Takoma Park, and on May 6, May Thacher Cooke noted 3 females at Cabin John. A single bird was reported seen at Glen Echo on the extraordinary date of May 26, but since the observer's name is not available this would not stand as a valid record.

Recent records began in 1942, when Haven Kolb collected two males near Towson on Jan. 17 (2). The first extensive flight into our State




EVENING GROSBEAK

RECORDS in MARYLAND

took place during the winter of 1945-46, and this was well documented in the literature by Emlen and Davis (3), Middlekauff (4), Stewart and Robbins (5), and Brackbill (6). Extreme dates that winter were November 15 (Baltimore) and May 13 (Dickeyville); and the counties claiming Evening Grosbeak records were Baltimore, Charles, Garrett, Montgomery, Prince Georges and Washington.

The only observations for the following winter were made at Halethorpe, where Robert Bowen noted 4 birds on April 5 and the last one on April 19.

The winter of 1947-48 was a blank as far as Maryland was concerned.

The following year was another poor one, with the only observation coming from Richard D. Cole in Towson who saw two birds on March 10.

In the next winter the few Maryland records were concentrated in the vicinity of Laurel, with a maximum of 19 individuals on April 27, and with extreme dates of November 19 (Patuxent Refuge, Robbins and Llewellyn) and April 29 (Laurel, DeWitt Donaldson).

In December 1950 single birds were found on the Cumberland and Catoctin Christmas Counts, and a flock of 11 at Berlin during the Ocean City Count. The only other report was a flock which spent the winter at the Laurel feeding station of Mrs. Bryan P. Warren.

A recapitulation of county records shows reports from seven of the eight counties bordering the Potomac River (all except St. Marys), plus Baltimore, Anne Arundel, Dorchester and Worcester. Extreme dates for the State stand as November 15 and May 13.

## Arrivals, Fall of 1951

One of the characteristics of the great invasion was its early start. Arrival dates for the eastern states were gathered from many sources by Professor and Mrs. B. M. Shaub of Northampton, Massachusetts, and published by them in Evening Grosbeak Survey News. First dates broke early arrival records in many of the states concerned. Some of the earliest ones were: September 1 at Ottawa, Ontario; September 5 at Kokadjo, Maine; September 14 at West Hartford, Connecticut; September 26 at Potsdam, New York; October 14 at Hawk Mountain, Pennsylvania; October 20 at Morgantown, West Virginia; November 7 at Front Royal, Virginia; November 17 at Greeneville, Tennessee; and November 28 at Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Robert E. Stewart found the first Maryland flock, five birds, at Patuxent Refuge on October 23. In the next few days other reports were received in rapid succession. Noss saw six at Glenburnie on October 27. Seth Low observed one at Triadelphia Reservoir on October 28. Miss H. Elizabeth Slater noted a flock of 11 south of Mountain Lake Park on October 30, and DeWitt Donaldson saw 10 birds at Laurel on the same day.

The month of November saw an extension of records to Baltimore City and to Frederick, Carroll and southern Montgomery Counties, and a gradual increase in the size of the flocks. John Terborgh had a group of 30 at Priest Bridge on November 8, John H. Fales recorded 40 in the Woodside section of Silver Spring on November 11, and Duvall Jones saw about 20 at Westminster on November 15.

## Midwinter Populations

During December, January and February small flocks were noted from time to time in all sections of the State, and these gradually began to visit feeding stations where sunflower seeds were supplied. Many reports drifted in from non-club members who did not keep records of dates of first appearance. Those feeding station arrival dates which are available are: Jan. 1, Baltimore County (J. W. Poultney), Jan. 14, Riverdale (W. H. Cheesman), Feb. 8, Fort Washington (J. O. Stevenson) and Feb. 17, Chattolanee (Mrs. W. G. Hoffman 3rd). Except for about 60 birds at the home of John Stanley in Laurel from about December on, flocks ranged from 2 to 30. At least 25 wintered at Patuxent Refuge, feeding primarily in a stand of mature pines.

## Spring Flight

A gradual increase in number of reports took place during the latter part of March, and accelerated in April. A flock of 40 appeared at Chase on March 15 (O. W. Crowder). Mrs. H. P. Strack reported a flock in Towson the same day, and another at Riderwood the next day; at the end of March these contained 10 and 6 birds, respectively. On April 2 a flock of 20 appeared at Stevenson, also in Baltimore County. By April 8 the Patuxent Refuge flock had increased to 50 birds (Stewart). From the Eastern Shore there was a report of 2 birds at Denton on March 18 (Tommy Sutton), and a flock at a feeding station near Easton in Talbot County. The peak of abundance coincided in most areas with the head wave of April 17-23 as our own flocks were augmented by those which had passed the winter in Virginia and the Carolinas. During this peak Evening Grosbeaks reappeared at stations from which they had previously departed. They also were found at still additional locations, including Fairhaven (Mrs. W. L. Hunt) and Kingsville. A most unusual migratory flight which was witnessed at Frederick by Mrs. Malvin Partridge will be reported separately.

## Departure Dates

Most of the May dates were from feeding stations, indicating that there was a tendency for the grosbeaks to remain longer in areas where they were fed. The southernmost feeding station in Maryland to entertain this species reported a departure date of April 16 (Fort Washington, Stevenson). Seth H. Low saw his last 4 at Unity on May 1, and Mr. Cheesman heard his last at Riverdale on the second. Departures from Baltimore City were during the first week of May. In the Laurel area, all stations reported different departure dates: one bird on

May 8 at Patuxent Refuge (Stewart), 2 on May 9 at Mrs. Taylor's home on Fourth Street, and 2 on May 14 at "Robbins Nest", 1 mile farther west. Mrs. Redmond C. Stewart, Sr., reported to Hervey Brackbill that she saw two females at Eccleston in Baltimore County on May 16. The last bird of all was seen in Laurel by Mrs. Robert McCeney on May 18. During the course of the winter five new counties recorded the Evening Grosbeak: Carroll, Howard, Harford, Caroline and Talbot.

## Banding Records

Apparently the only Maryland banding of Evening Grosbeaks this year was conducted at "Robbins Nest". We were among the last of the local feeding stations to be visited by these birds, although a single individual flew over on December 26 and there were four records from March 21 to April 1 of singles or small flocks passing over. From April 3 to May 14 grosbeaks visited the feeding shelves daily and 115 individuals were trapped and banded. Only 12 of these birds "repeated" in the traps, and daily counts of the number of banded and unbanded birds present showed that there was a continual turnover of populations. Thirty-nine (34%) of the birds banded were males. Although there was considerable interchange of banded birds between the stations of Mr. Arthur Fast, Mrs. E. D. Peacock, Mrs. Mitchell Dreese and Mrs. Mary Borton, all in the Virginia suburbs, none of the Laurel birds were retaken by them. On April 23 we trapped one of Mrs. Borton's January 11 males, however, and on various dates we saw at least 2 birds wearing the color-band combination of Mrs. Peacock. Birds with our combination were reported at the Laurel feeding stations of Mrs. Robert McCeney and Mrs. Paul Bounds.

On April 19 a male which had been banded on May 9, 1950 at Lexington, Massachusetts by Mrs. Ada C. Govan, visited our station. This gave us a particular thrill because Mrs. Govan, author of "Wings at My Window", has exchanged birds with my Dad's banding station in Belmont, Massachusetts, on several occasions, and this is the closest we have come to trapping a bird from "home". We hope that some of the 115 birds banded during the 1951-52 visitation will be retaken by other banders during subsequent winters and thus furnish some information on the future travels of the Maryland Evening Grosbeaks.

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R. D. 1, Brooklyn Bridge Road, Laurel




THE SEASON - May, June, July, August, 1952

Chandler S. Robbins

Migration during the month of May tended to be a little later than usual. This was due in part to the damming up of migrants by the long rainy spell of late April, and in part to the fact that May averaged a little on the cool and wet side. We had the fourth warmest June on record. But more important ornithologically than the temperature was the succession of three severe storms on June 9-10, 19 and 29, with gusts tying the all-time record of 80 miles an hour at Friendship Airport on the 10th and 29th. These winds played havoc with exposed nests. July was the third warmest on record with a state-wide average of 78°. The first real cool snap of the fall reached us on Aug. 23. The mercury dropped to the mid-thirties in Garrett County, and to 48° at Friendship Airport on the 24th; a flurry of fall arrival dates resulted (see table 2).

Loons, Cormorants, Herons. Common Loons are seldom seen in Maryland after mid-May, but a single bird stopped briefly at Patuxent Refuge on May 30 (Paul Springer and George Saunders), and one in winter plumage was seen at Gibson Island on June 18 (Mrs. Gail Tappan and Mrs. W. L. Henderson). A lone Double-crested Cormorant at Patuxent Refuge from Aug.4 to 6 (Francis Uhler and others) was the first ever seen there. Other interesting occurrences of this cormorant were at Middle River on May 4 (flock of 12, Edwin Willis), one in the South River, June 22, one to 11 at Poplar Island between July 8 and Aug. 30 (Judge and Mrs. Henderson), and 9 off Breezy Point, Calvert County on Aug. 9 (John Fales). The best count yet obtained in the Ocean City area was 4,600 on May 11 by David Cutler and other members of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club. The late summer heron flight began on June 29, when Mrs. A. J. Fletcher noted the first American Egret at Denton. Eight days later the first 2 arrived at Middle River; they reached a peak of 40 individuals on Aug. 19 (Willis). The first wandering Little Blue Heron was reported from Denton on July 10 by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Fletcher. A Snowy Egret which was discovered at Denton on Aug. 3 by Margarete Butenschoen was a new bird for the Caroline County list.

Waterfowl. A few late stragglers which give every appearance of being healthy birds are noted each year. This time we have a report of a flock of 5 Whistling Swans flying north over Grasonville on May 18 (Frank Gross). Marvin Hewitt saw a Pintail at Denton on May 26. At Galloway Creek, near Middle River, Willis recorded 3 Redheads and a Ring-necked Duck through May 11, and at Gibson Island a Lesser Scaup remained to May 18 and an American Golden-eye to June 5 (Hendersons).

Shorebirds. Edwin Willis reported a poor shorebird migration at Strawberry point in the spring; but frequent summer rains kept the flats from drying up, for the first time in four years, and some interesting early dates of fall arrival were recorded. Two Least Sandpipers on July 10 were the first to show up, followed on the 13th by 4 Lesser Yellow-legs, on the 15th by a Pectoral Sandpiper, on the 20th by a Dowitcher and on the 22nd by 2 Semipalmated Plovers. All but the last named represent the earliest fall record away from the coast. An Upland Plover which Dr. Saunders watched at Patuxent Refuge on May 27 is the latest spring migrant of this species ever recorded in Maryland. Dr. Richards obtained a high count for this species on July 18, when he noted 20 at Emmitsburg. A Woodcock seen at Laurel on Dec. 27 by Arthur Kraeski is the first winter record for that area.

Gulls and Terns. Ring-billed Gulls did not summer in the Middle River area this year, but they did remain throughout the period in the vicinity of Gibson Island. The bulk departed from Middle River on May 6, just two days after the last Herring Gull was seen. Except for two Ring-bills on June 3, Willis found none between May 13 and Aug. 5. The first Herring Gull did not return to that area until Aug. 29, although a few remained at Gibson Island. Laughing Gulls, which did not penetrate as far up as the Middle River area in spring, were first observed there on Aug. 2, when hundreds drifted over a residential area on a light easterly wind. The largest concentration, about a thousand, was seen by Willis on Back River, Aug. 19. On the 22nd, A. J. Fletcher recorded one at Choptank, for the first Caroline County record. As usual, the Least and Caspian were the only terns reported from the Upper Chesapeake in the spring. The latter reached a peak of 11 at Middle River on May 4. Fall arrival dates in the same locality were July 10 for the Least Tern, and Aug. 3 for the Forster's and Common. A record count of 3,050 Common Terns and 3 of the rare (in Maryland) Roseate Tern was reported by Cutler and party in the Ocean City area, May 11. A Black Tern seen at Seneca on June 12 is the latest on record for the State (John W. Taylor, Jr.).

Cuckoos, Nighthawks, Hummingbirds. Cuckoos, which did not arrive in most areas until June last year, appeared nearer the normal time this year, both species being noted in many localities by the second week of May. Observers who participated in lunar counts of migrating birds heard both species in southward migration in good numbers in mid-August. The first migrating Black-bill, noted at Laurel on July 20, was more than a week ahead of the earliest previous fall migration date for Maryland (Robbins). The first southbound Nighthawk

Table 1. Spring arrival dates, 1952

| | Garrett | Emtsburg | Westmins | Baltmore | Midl Rivr | Laurel | Silv Sprg | Gibs Is. | So. Md. | Caroline |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yellow-bill. Cuckoo | 5/25 | 5/10 | | 5/24 | 5/11 | 5/11 | 5/17 | 5/11 | 5/9 | 5/4 |
| Black-bill. Cuckoo | 0 | 5/12 | | 5/16 | 5/6 | 5/16 | | 5/11 | 5/9 | 0 |
| R-thr. Hummingbird | 5/25 | 5/15 | 5/7 | 5/18 | 5/4 | 4/29 | | 5/3 | 5/4 | 5/1 |
| Eastern Kingbird | 5/13 | 5/1 | 5/11 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 5/6 | 5/2 | 4/21 | 5/4 | 4/17 |
| Crested Flycatcher | | 5/4 | 5/6 | 5/2 | 5/3 | 5/3 | 5/3 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 5/2 |
| Least Flycatcher | 5/11 | 5/7 | 5/10 | 5/6 | 5/11 | 5/3 | 5/2 | | 0 | 0 |
| Acadian Flycatcher | 0 | 5/24 | 5/23 | 5/13 | 5/24 | 5/6 | 5/11 | 5/11 | 5/4 | |
| Wood Pewee | 5/10 | 5/7 | | 5/6 | 5/11 | 5/10 | 5/11 | 5/11 | 5/4 | 5/6 |
| Olive-backed Thrush | 5/11 | 5/4 | | 5/11 | 5/11 | 5/5 | 5/4 | 0 | 5/4 | 5/16 |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush | | 5/19 | | 5/13 | 5/14 | 5/10 | 5/4 | 5/15 | 5/11 | 5/21 |
| Veery | 5/10 | 5/3 | 5/9 | 5/6 | 5/3 | 5/10 | 5/2 | 5/9 | 5/10 | 5/10 |
| White-eyed Vireo | | 0 | 5/9 | 5/4 | 4/22 | 4/21 | 4/20 | 5/1 | 4/20 | 4/23 |
| Yellow-thr. Vireo | 5/11 | 5/4 | 5/9 | 5/3 | 5/4 | 4/21 | 4/20 | 5/11 | 4/20 | 5/9 |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 5/5 | 5/4 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 5/3 | 4/22 | 5/2 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 4/23 |
| Worm-eating Warbler | 0 | 5/4 | 5/10 | 5/4 | | 5/7 | | 5/11 | 0 | 0 |
| Golden-wing Warbler | 5/10 | 5/8 | | 5/10 | 5/1 | 4/23 | 4/26 | 5/11 | 0 | 5/7 |
| Blue-winged Warbler | 0 | 0 | | 5/10 | 5/2 | | | 5/11 | 5/4 | 5/4 |
| Tennessee Warbler | | 5/6 | | 5/10 | 5/21 | 5/5 | 5/20 | 5/11 | 0 | 0 |
| Nashville Warbler | | 4/23 | | | 5/4 | | 5/4 | 5/11 | 0 | 0 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 5/10 | 5/5 | 5/10 | 5/10 | 5/8 | 5/7 | 5/3 | 5/1 | 5/9 | 5/7 |
| Cape May Warbler | | 5/3 | 5/18 | 4/29 | 5/4 | 5/11 | 5/3 | 5/11 | 0 | |
| Blk-t. Blue Warbler | 5/17 | 5/4 | 5/8 | 5/1 | 5/3 | 5/3 | 4/29 | 5/11 | 5/9 | 5/5 |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 5/11 | 5/1 | | 5/6 | 5/3 | 5/7 | 5/3 | 5/11 | 5/9 | 5/24 |
| Chest-sided Warbler | 5/4 | 5/4 | 5/4 | 5/10 | 5/3 | 5/7 | 5/5 | 5/11 | 5/9 | 5/7 |
| Bay-breasted Warbler | | 5/10 | 5/18 | 5/10 | 5/11 | 5/10 | | 5/11 | 0 | 5/20 |
| Black-poll Warbler | 5/26 | 5/12 | 5/10 | 5/6 | 5/9 | 5/4 | | 5/10 | 5/9 | |
| No. Water-thrush | | 5/4 | | 5/4 | 5/4 | | 5/10 | 5/11 | 5/4 | |
| Kentucky Warbler | | 5/6 | 5/10 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 5/3 | 5/3 | 5/11 | 5/4 | |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | 5/18 | 5/3 | 5/9 | 5/4 | 5/3 | 5/5 | 5/4 | 4/16 | 5/4 | 5/9 |
| Hooded Warbler | 5/18 | 5/1 | 5/6 | 5/1 | 5/9 | 4/21 | 4/26 | 5/6 | 5/4 | 5/3 |
| Wilson's Warbler | 5/17 | 5/15 | 5/10 | 5/9 | 5/11 | | | 5/11 | 5/10 | 5/23 |
| Canada Warbler | 5/10 | 5/7 | 5/18 | 5/9 | 5/7 | 5/7 | 5/18 | 5/11 | 5/9 | 5/16 |
| Bobolink | | 5/10 | | | 5/6 | 5/3 | | 0 | 5/11 | 5/7 |
| Orchard Oriole | | 0 | 5/10 | 5/16 | 5/6 | 5/2 | | 5/6 | 5/9 | 4/19 |
| Scarlet Tanager | 5/25 | 5/4 | 5/4 | 5/4 | 5/3 | 4/22 | 4/24 | 5/11 | 5/4 | 5/9 |
| Rose-br. Grosbeak | 5/7 | 5/4 | 5/10 | 4/29 | 4/23 | 5/3 | 5/4 | 5/11 | 4/20 | 5/2 |
| Indigo Bunting | 5/11 | 5/7 | 5/10 | 5/5 | 5/3 | 5/3 | 5/7 | 4/25 | 5/4 | |

was seen at Middle River on July 21, but it was not until the middle of August that any appreciable flight developed. In the evening of Aug. 21, Dr. and Mrs. John Richards watched a concentration of about 500 Nighthawks flying over the Emmitsburg area in a drizzle, apparently held up by heavier rain to the south. For some unexplained reason, Ruby-throated Hummingbirds were scarce throughout the State in the spring and early summer.

Flycatchers, Swallows, Nuthatches. Most flycatchers, especially the Eastern Kingbird and the Crested, were a week or so late in arriving this spring. June 8 was a late departure date for the Least Flycatcher at Emmitsburg (Richards). The Tree Swallow, always the earliest southbound passerines, arrived at Middle River on July 10 (Willis). On Aug. 30 the Hendersons witnessed a southward flight of 2,000 Purple Martins at Coaches Island, Talbot County. Several late Red-breasted Nuthatches were observed, as follows: 6 at Westminster on May 5 (Duvall Jones), 1 at Middle River to May 8 (Willis) and 1 at Catoctin on May 17.

Late spring departures. The following observations are all close to the latest record for Maryland: Gray-cheeked Thrush on June 1 at Patuxent Refuge (Paul Springer) and Middle River (Willis); Golden-

Table 2. Fall arrival dates of Warblers, 1952

| | Emmits-burg | Middle River | Laurel | Caroline County |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black and White Warbler | 8/23 | 8/10 | | 8/4 |
| Worm-eating Warbler | 0 | 8/17 | 8/16 | 0 |
| Golden-winged Warbler | 0 | 0 | 8/25 | |
| Blue-winged Warbler | 0 | 8/12 | | |
| Tennessee Warbler | 0 | 9/14 | | 0 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 8/27 | 8/19 | 8/25 | 9/5 |
| Cape May Warbler | 9/25 | | | |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | 8/23 | 9/4 | | |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 9/3 | 9/4 | 8/23 | |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 8/23 | 8/24 | 8/25 | |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 9/3 | 8/17 | 8/23 | |
| Bay-breasted Warbler | 8/19 | 9/8 | 8/24 | |
| Prairie Warbler | 0 | 8/14 | 8/25 | 8/31 |
| Oven-bird | 8/28 | 8/17 | 8/16 | |
| Northern Water-thrush | 9/3 | 7/26 | 8/18 | 8/31 |
| Kentucky Warbler | | 7/29 | 8/16 | 8/30 |
| Mourning Warbler | 0 | 0 | 8/20 | 0 |
| Hooded Warbler | | 8/12 | | 0 |
| Wilson's Warbler | 9/18 | | 8/25 | 0 |
| Canada Warbler | 8/19 | 8/17 | 8/9 | 8/28 |
| Redstart | 8/19 | 7/29 | 8/24 | 8/21 |

winged Warbler at Denton on May 20 (Fletcher and Hewitt); Wilson's Warbler at Middle River on May 26 (Willis); Black-throated Blue Warbler at Emmitsburg on June 5 (Richards); and Lincoln's Sparrow at Towson on May 26 (Coles). Late stragglers of common winter residents included a White-throated Sparrow at Middle River on June 10 (Willis), Slate-colored Junco at Hampstead on June 18 (Duncan McIntosh), and a Swamp Sparrow at Greensboro on May 25 (Hewitt).

Table 1 is a continuation of the table in the preceding issue. The Garrett County dates were furnished by Miss Elizabeth Slater and Miss Friel Sanders. The only other important change in localities and observers is the combining of Lake Roland (Mrs. Kaestner and others) and Towson (Mr. and Mrs. Richard Cole) under the heading Baltimore, and also including in this column the observations of Miss A. A. Brandenburg in Baltimore and Haven Kolb at Loch Raven. Underscored dates represent the earliest Maryland report of the year. Although Garrett County did not register any "firsts", it is significant that the only species recorded in the county within three days of the earliest Maryland report of the year (Chestnut-sided and Canada Warblers) are species which reach our state via the Mississippi Valley rather than from the Southeast. Note that the Acadian Flycatcher did not reach points at the limit of its breeding range until two weeks after its arrival in other areas.

Table 2 gives a summary of fall arrival dates for early warblers. As in previous tables, underscoring indicates the earliest date of the season, "0" means the species was not recorded, and a blank shows that no significant arrival date was submitted. Emmitsburg dates were furnished by Dr. Richards, Middle River by Willis, Laurel (including Patuxent Refuge) largely by Stewart and Robbins, and Caroline County by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Fletcher, Marvin Hewitt, Alicia Knotts and Grant Simmons.

## THE SEASON - September, October, November, December, 1952

Chandler S. Robbins

This period, covering roughly two-thirds of the long fall migration period, furnished an interesting alternation of warm and cool weather, drought and flood. The first day of September saw the tail of a tropical hurricane sweep through the central part of our State, cutting power lines, flattening many crops, and depositing up to 5 inches of rain. Rainfall for the rest of the month was light, and temperatures near normal, with none of the usual cool snaps that hasten southward migration. October was the driest since 1930, and many stations recorded no measurable rainfall at all between Oct. 11 and Nov. 10! October was the 8th coldest on record for that month, with the mercury dropping into the 20's (teens in the mountains) on Oct. 20-21 and Oct. 29-30. The coolness in general, and these two cold snaps in particular, effectively completed the fall migration of all of the earliest groups of migrants as far as Maryland was concerned. November remained mild, with few cold days. Measurable precipitation fell somewhere in the State on all but three days of the month, and the statewide average showed this the wettest November in history. The first general snow of the season (about 2 inches) fell on Nov. 30. December was mild and open.

Loons, Grebes, Cormorants, Herons. Judge W. L. Henderson and Mrs. Henderson found 2 Common Loons at Poplar Island, Talbot Co., on Sept. 10, within two days of the earliest fall record for Maryland. Edwin Willis had his first Middle River record of the Red-throated Loon (1) on Dec. 25. High counts for Pied-billed Grebes included 23 at Middle River, Sept. 21 (Edwin Willis), 80 near Berlin on Nov. 1 (Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Bergstrom, Seth Low and Chandler Robbins), and 30 in the North East River on Sept. 30 (Hendersons). On Sept. 13 the Hendersons counted 42 Double-crested Cormorants on fish pound stakes at the mouth of the Chester River, their highest count to date in the Chesapeake Bay area. A Great Blue Heron at Patuxent Refuge on Dec. 29 was the latest ever recorded there (Robert E. Stewart); as many as 7 were seen at Gibson Island on Dec. 28 (E. Tappan, V. Henderson). Six Snowy Egrets seen at Blackwater Refuge on Nov. 1 (Bergstroms) were late for such a high count. Green Herons normally leave Maryland in September. The only one recorded this fall after Sept. 30 (at Denton, Mrs. A. J. Fletcher) was a wintering individual seen repeatedly by Mrs. Henderson and several other observers at Gibson Island throughout the period. This is the second December occurrence in Maryland.

Geese and Ducks. There was a very fine flight of Canada Geese, with general arrivals in Lankford Bay, Gibson Island and Denton on Sept. 28. A flock of 55 Blue Geese which flew low over Berwyn on

Oct. 18 is by far the largest group of this species ever recorded in Maryland—or anywhere in the northeast (Robbins); one Snow Goose was with them. Baldpates also arrived early; Dr. John W. Richards saw the first 2 at Emmitsburg on Sept. 2, and four days later John W. Taylor, Jr., noted 15 at Kent Narrows and 5 at Blackwater Refuge. A new species for Frederick County was a Shoveller observed at Emmitsburg, Oct. 12-18, and 2 on Nov. 23 (Richards).

Hawks. The September hawk flights will be summarized separately. Also, the excellent observations by Douglas Hackman at White Marsh will be presented as a special article. Highlights of the fall were single Golden Eagles at Emmitsburg on the early and late dates of Sept. 20 and Nov. 6 (John Richards and Paul O'Brien), at White Marsh on Oct. 13 and Nov. 4 (Hackman), and Blackwater Refuge from Dec. 22 on (Charles Clagett and many others). Oct. 24 was a new late record for the Osprey at Patuxent Refuge (Stewart), although single birds seen the first two days of November at Blackwater and near Ocean City were not so unusual.

Gallinules, Shorebirds. A new late date for the Florida Gallinule was established on Nov. 2 when a single bird was seen near Berlin (Bergstroms, Low, Robbins). Late shorebirds identified the same date and place were 12 Dowitchers and a Knot, while on the preceding day as many as 40 Dowitchers were on the flats at Blackwater Refuge headquarters. Although the Woodcock has never been seen in mid-winter on Patuxent Refuge, Arthur Kraeski found one along the Patuxent River near Laurel on Dec. 27. Late for an inland locality were 2 Greater Yellowlegs at Emmitsburg on Oct. 24 (Richards). Pectoral Sandpiper was added to the Caroline County list on Nov. 1 when 2 were found by the Fletchers and Marvin Hewitt; 7 were seen on Nov. 4, and 5 on Nov. 6. Even more interesting were 3 late Red-backed Sandpipers at Gibson Island on Dec. 28, the latest record for the west shore of the Chesapeake (E. M. Barry).

Gulls and Terns. Three Great Black-backed Gulls were at Ocean City as early as Sept. 13 (W. Bryant Tyrrell). Every fall seems to bring its complement of late tern records. We now take it for granted that small numbers of Forster's and Royal Terns will be seen to mid-November in Dorchester and Worcester Counties. A single Forster's Tern was seen at Port Tobacco in Charles County on Nov. 16, where the latest record was Nov. 18 last year (Catherine Crone, Robert L. Farr, Allen R. Stickley, Jr.). Three Least Terns and a Black Tern seen on Sept. 28 near the mouth of the Chester River by Judge and Mrs. Henderson are close to the latest dates on record for both species.

Land birds. Table 3 shows the first statewide table of fall departure dates, a feature which will become increasingly more valuable as more and more observers from all parts of Maryland contribute to it. Which species that winter in the tropics regularly depart at about the same date from all parts of our state? Which

Table 3. Fall departure dates, 1952

| | Emits-burg | Balti-more | Laurel | Gibsn Is. | South Md. | Caroline |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yellow-billed Cuckoo | 9/9 | 9/20 | 10/12 | 9/26 | 9/21 | 10/6 |
| Nighthawk | 9/29 | 9/16 | 9/17 | | | 9/24 |
| Chimney Swift | 10/15 | 10/11 | 10/11 | 10/9 | 9/21 | 10/14 |
| Ruby-throated Hummingbird | 9/25 | 9/13 | 9/13 | 9/30 | 9/21 | 9/17 |
| Eastern Kingbird | 8/26 | 9/13 | 9/1 | | 9/7 | 9/30 |
| Crested Flycatcher | 9/10 | 9/13 | | 9/15 | | 9/12 |
| Eastern Wood Pewee | 9/18 | 9/28 | 10/4 | 9/26 | 9/21 | 10/14 |
| Tree Swallow | 0 | 8/29 | 10/4 | | | 10/21 |
| Barn Swallow | 9/11 | 10/9 | 9/1 | | | 9/18 |
| Purple Martin | 8/11 | 9/21 | 9/1 | 9/15 | | 9/2 |
| House Wren | 10/13 | 10/12 | 10/5 | 10/8 | 9/21 | |
| Catbird | 10/12 | 11/8 | 10/2 | 12/28 | | 10/28 |
| Brown Thrasher | 9/28 | 9/23 | 9/23 | 10/16 | 9/21 | 9/30 |
| Wood Thrush | 9/18 | 9/28 | 10/3 | 9/18 | 9/21 | 10/23 |
| Olive-backed Thrush | 10/11 | 9/27 | 10/7 | 9/26 | 0 | 10/6 |
| Gray-cheeked Thrush | 10/5 | 10/3 | 10/7 | 0 | 0 | 10/1 |
| Blue-gray Gnatcatcher | | | 9/18 | 10/16 | | 9/18 |
| White-eyed Vireo | 9/17 | 9/21 | | 9/18 | 9/21 | 9/30 |
| Yellow-throated Vireo | 9/17 | 9/28 | | 0 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Blue-headed Vireo | 10/15 | | 10/8 | 0 | 0 | 10/22 |
| Red-eyed Vireo | 9/17 | 10/5 | 10/4 | | 9/21 | 10/6 |
| Black and White Warbler | 9/18 | 9/28 | 9/29 | 9/26 | 9/21 | 10/30 |
| Worm-eating Warbler | 0 | 9/10 | 9/23 | 0 | 0 | 9/9 |
| Nashville Warbler | 10/12 | 10/4 | 10/10 | 10/7 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Parula Warbler | 10/12 | 9/28 | 10/8 | 9/15 | 9/21 | 10/29 |
| Magnolia Warbler | 10/12 | 10/19 | 10/1 | 10/16 | 9/21 | 9/30 |
| Cape May Warbler | 10/10 | 9/28 | | 10/16 | 0 | 10/17 |
| Black-throated Blue Warbler | 10/12 | 10/4 | 10/4 | 10/16 | 0 | 10/5 |
| Black-throated Green Warbler | 10/13 | 10/12 | 10/12 | 10/16 | 9/21 | 10/15 |
| Blackburnian Warbler | 9/27 | 9/28 | 9/30 | 0 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Chestnut-sided Warbler | 9/25 | 9/27 | 9/14 | 0 | 9/7 | 9/30 |
| Bay-breasted Warbler | 10/12 | 9/28 | 10/1 | 0 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Black-poll Warbler | 10/12 | 10/3 | 10/19 | 10/9 | 9/21 | 9/30 |
| Pine Warbler | 0 | 0 | 10/4 | 10/28 | 9/21 | 10/3 |
| Oven-bird | 9/28 | 9/27 | 9/14 | 9/24 | | 10/6 |
| Northern Water-thrush | 9/11 | 9/21 | 9/2 | 9/18 | 0 | 9/19 |
| Kentucky Warbler | 9/3 | | 8/27 | | | 9/19 |
| Yellow-throat | 10/15 | 10/12 | 10/4 | 9/24 | 9/21 | 9/30 |
| Yellow-breasted Chat | 9/18 | 9/17 | 9/2 | | | 9/10 |
| Hooded Warbler | 9/19 | 8/30 | 10/4 | 9/15 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Canada Warbler | 9/18 | 9/22 | 10/4 | 0 | 0 | 9/11 |
| American Redstart | 9/18 | 9/28 | 9/15 | | 9/21 | 9/25 |
| Orchard Oriole | 0 | 8/19 | | 10/13 | 9/21 | 9/11 |
| Baltimore Oriole | 9/17 | 8/29 | 8/27 | | | 9/2 |
| Scarlet Tanager | 10/10 | 10/23 | | 10/12 | 9/21 | |
| Rose-breasted Grosbeak | 9/25 | 9/28 | 10/7 | 0 | 9/21 | 0 |
| Indigo Bunting | 10/2 | 10/4 | 10/4 | | 9/21 | 9/28 |
| Chipping Sparrow | 10/23 | 10/12 | 11/11 | 12/28 | | 10/30 |

'western' species linger fully as long in the mountains as on the Coastal Plain, and which, though regular in the western half of the State are not usually recorded at all on the Eastern Shore? What species move southward so slowly that we can actually follow their departure southward across the State, and which linger in the tidal areas weeks after the last stragglers have left the Piedmont? Several interesting clues appear in this first table. Such 'western' species as the Nashville and Bay-breasted Warblers were seen not only more regularly, but to later dates in the western half of Maryland than on the Coastal Plain; neither appeared in the long list of species from Caroline County on the Eastern Shore. It may be significant that the silent and inconspicuous (in fall) Yellow-billed Cuckoo was seen almost equally late in all section of Maryland. The Chimney Swift, on the other hand, had completely vacated Garrett County before Sept. 20, but was still present almost a month later from Catoctin Mountain to Caroline County. Underscored dates are the latest reported for Maryland this fall; "O" means that the species was not recorded during the entire fall migration period; a blank indicates that no significant departure date was reported. Emmitsburg observations were supplied by Dr. John W. Richards and Paul O'Brien; Baltimore by Edwin Willis, Miss A. A. Brandenburg, Haven Kolb, Charles Buchanan, Mrs. Herbert Strack, and Douglas Hackman; Laurel (including Patuxent Refuge) by Stewart and Robbins; Gibson Island primarily by Mrs. Henderson and Mrs. Tappan; Southern Maryland largely by Catherine Crone and Allen Stickley; and Caroline County by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Fletcher, Marvin Hewitt and Miss A. May Thompson.

Other late departure dates worthy of mention include a Crested Flycatcher at Unity on Sept. 28 (Low) and a Prairie Warbler at Gibson Island, Oct. 20 (Charles Buchanan, Mrs. Tappan, Mrs. Henderson).

Nuthatches, Thrushes. It was not a good Red-breasted Nuthatch winter for us, despite a count of 10 birds at Gibson Island on Oct. 6 - which incidently was the first arrival date reported this fall; recall last year when they were noted in three counties before the close of August. The White-breasted Nuthatch, also, was below normal numbers in the Coastal Plain localities where it occurs only as a winter visitor. Some interesting thrush records were a byproduct of the telescopic observation of birds crossing the moon, identifications being made by means of the characteristic call notes each species gives while flying over. In the first week of September, Veeries far outnumbered all other thrushes combined; Stewart counted a peak of 130 Veeries passing over Patuxent Refuge in 1¼ hours (from 92 to 17 minutes before sunrise) on Sept. 5. During most of the rest of September the Olive-backed Thrush was in the lead with the Gray-cheek second. The heaviest flights were all heard in a period of an hour or less just before dawn. As many as 2,000 thrush chips were heard over northeastern Garrett County on Sept. 20 (Robbins), with Olive-backs twice as frequently heard as Gray-cheeks. Olive-backs were

noted at Middle River and Laurel on Sept. 4, Gray-cheeks were going over Laurel as early as Sept. 5, and an early Hermit Thrush was seen at Gibson Island on Oct. 1 (Mrs. Tappan and Mrs. Henderson).

Kinglets, Vireos, Warblers, Tanagers. A heavy flight of Golden-crowned Kinglets passed through Maryland in October and November, reaching a peak of 100 at the early date of Oct. 16 on Gibson Island (Mrs. Henderson and Mrs. Tappan). The majority of them passed on to the southeastern states, where they wintered in unusual numbers this year. The rare Philadelphia Vireo was seen east to Laurel (Sept. 23, Robbins); 3 were observed at Emmitsburg on Sept. 17 (Dr. Richards) and the same number at Monument Knob, Sept. 20 (R. J. Beaton); they are regular in Garrett County. A Cape May Warbler seen at Blackwater Refuge on Sept. 6 (John W. Taylor, Jr.) is of special interest because of the comparative scarcity of this species on the Eastern Shore; it is also the earliest date on record for that area. Ordinarily very few Scarlet Tanagers remain into October. This year, however, Dr. Richards saw one at Emmitsburg on Oct. 10, and Mrs. Tappan and Mrs. Henderson watched more than a dozen at Gibson Island on Oct. 12.

Finches and Sparrows. This was a poor season for Evening Grosbeaks; the only reports came from Harford, Prince Georges and Montgomery Counties. Pine Siskins, on the other hand, put on the biggest show in years. They arrived suddenly in mid-October, and large flocks remained with us throughout the period. Flocks of 100 or more were seen in Frederick, Montgomery, Prince Georges, Charles, Talbot and Worcester Counties, showing that nearly the whole state was engulfed in the invasion. Dr. Richards' count of 400 siskins in 1½ hours on Oct. 18 at Emmitsburg is the highest ever recorded in Maryland in fall. Migrant Slate-colored Juncos usually reach our State about the first of October, and are reported by most observers within a week of this time. This fall, however, arrivals were spread out over a month. Exceedingly early individuals were noted at Loch Raven on Sept. 13 (Haven Kolb) and Baltimore on Sept. 16 (E. A. McGinity). By the end of the month small numbers had been reported in a few other localities as far down as southern Maryland (but not in the western counties!). The first Eastern Shore report was from Denton on Oct. 3; two days later the first individual was found at Emmitsburg. Most other localities had their first bird Oct. 8 to 10, although Gibson Island birds did not check in until the 15th. Such a spread of arrival dates might for many species be attributed to insufficient observation; but this would not be the case for such a common and conspicuous bird as the junco. White-crowned Sparrows appear to be pushing ever farther southeastward as wintering birds in Maryland. First records of this species at any season for Caroline and Worcester Counties were established during this year's Christmas Bird Counts. The Snow Bunting has a propensity for turning up along the Chesapeake Bay shore as well as along the ocean beach. This species was noted at Gibson Island from Nov. 18 to Dec. 14, with a maximum of 25 on Nov. 28 (Mrs. Tappan and Mrs. Henderson).